Management and Acquisition of Grey Literature in Academic Libraries: 
A Case Study of Bells University of Technology, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT. Grey literature is important sources and means of distributing up-to-date information. As such, it is crucial for research, analytical thinking, and knowledge development. Grey literature is generated daily by academics, researchers, and administrators in universities and other academic institutions. The major challenges to its acquisition and organization for utilization include lack of strict bibliographic control, nonprofessional lay-out or formats, and low print runs. This paper shared the experience of the University Library of the Bells University of Technology (BellsTech), Nigeria regarding the acquisition and management of grey literature generated within the University. Specifically, it focused on the nature and academic impact of grey literature and its acquisition and management by the Library. It is concluded that considering its research and historical values, grey literature should be acquired and managed by academic libraries.

I. Introduction

Nigeria has the highest number of universities and research institutions compared to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. It produces the largest volumes of research output of paramount scientific value (Ridwan, 2015). In spite of this, however, “a significant part of scientific and technical information remains unavailable on the web” (Schöpfel & Prost, 2015). Such information is usually circulated with restrictions in the form of primary, secondary, and tertiary literature sources. Of all available scientific literature, emphasis is usually placed only on peer-reviewed and formally published literature in academic environments (Yasin & Hasnain, 2012). Thus, Schembri (2007) posited that scientists could only communicate the results of their research to others primarily through scientific literature. Siegel (2010) corroborated Schembri’s belief that in a publish-or-perish environment, academics are “evaluated, tenured (or not), and promoted based, to a greater extent, on their output of peer-reviewed publications in high impact journals” (p. 2).

Nevertheless, information is generally known to exist in different forms and formats. “[T]here is one form which despite being the most conventional is still the most unorganized and untapped pool of information” (Pandita & Singh, 2011). Besides the primary, secondary, and tertiary information sources available in universities and research institutions, there exist other sources of teaching, learning, research, and scientific information that are not published or distributed.
These sources form part of the academic library collections. As much as they are available, they remain invisible to researchers, academics, and students. These resources have been classified and referred to as grey literature with variant names such as “vague”, “ephemeral”, “informal”, “non-conventional”, “runaway”, “invisible” or “half-published” literature. They are also generally classified as too difficult to define. Literature attested that these resources are found in abundance within academic communities and that they are useful for research. Rucinski (2015) referred to grey literature as “a large and amorphous group of resources that is also ‘grey’ for being ‘uncertain, vague, and imprecise[e]’” (p. 544). The potential of grey literature has been noted to attract increasing attention from specialists working in the areas of education, research, development, and information.

Grey literature includes scientific, technical, economic, social, and other reports developed in national and private institutions, unpublished conference materials, standards/patents/technical specifications and recommendations, statistical resources, discussion/working papers, factsheets, promotion/advertising/commercial documentation, preprints, preliminary progress and advanced reports, research memoranda, posters, unpublished translations, and unpublished bibliographies (Rucinski, 2015; Nahotko, 2014; Fatokun & Amusa, 2014; and Siegel, 2010).

In this study, the following characteristics of grey literature as elucidated by Schöpfel (2010), Fatokun and Amusa (2014), and Rucinski (2015) were adopted: grey literature resources are transient in nature; they are crucial to research, analytical thinking, and knowledge development. Within universities, grey literature is generated daily by academics, researchers, and administrators, but the majority of such literature is not acquired or organized for use due to lack of bibliographic control, nonprofessional layout of format, and small print runs. Therefore, it is essential to make a comprehensive review of both the peer-reviewed (primary, secondary, and tertiary information resources) and non-peer-reviewed (grey literature).

All library routines and professional duties are aimed at providing information access. As academics, researchers, students, and administrators in academic institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa strive to come to terms with the ever-changing knowledge and information environment, information contained in grey literature needs to be tapped, even though the identification, acquisition, and management of these resources remain a challenge for information professionals (Rucinski, 2015). In principle and practice, the provision of access to all forms of knowledge and information requires responsive actions from libraries, information centers, and information professionals.

Acquisition and management of grey literature could play a very critical role in bridging the global knowledge gap. It is generally acknowledged that research institutions and universities have the primary mission of creating, sharing, and disseminating knowledge. The management and organization of institutional grey literature as a low-cost and low-barrier strategy could contribute to the accomplishment of this mission.
II. Literature Review

The evolution of grey literature has been divided by eminent scholars and researchers into five distinct time periods: prior to 1979, 1980 to 1990, 1991 to 2000, 2001 to 2005, and 2006 to the present (Rucinski, 2015).

According to Marcus (2010),

The task of creating a succinct definition of grey literature has been just as challenging as the discussion of how to raise awareness of the existence of this wide body of publications. Some researchers are euphoric when discussing the use of grey literature in their own research. (p. 11)

Information World (1996) called grey literature “the unsung hero, the foot soldier, the foundation of the building”.

Marcus (2010) opined that “researchers should include grey literature and published material side-by-side whenever conducting literature searches (especially when performing systematic reviews), in order to limit bias” (p. 12).

According to Schöpfel (2010), the most common definition of grey literature is the Luxembourg definition, which was discussed and approved during the 3rd International Conference on Grey Literature in 1997. The Luxembourg definition defines grey literature as literature “which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers”. It was also agreed that grey literature is distinguished by its scope and type of publishers. With these two criteria, grey literature became confined to government, scientific, technological or business and non-commercial publication (Nahotko, 2014).

However, at the 12th International Conference on Grey Literature held in Prague in 2010, a more widely and currently used definition of grey literature was drafted. It stated

Grey literature stands for manifold document types produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats that are protected by intellectual property rights, of sufficient quality to be collected and preserved by library holdings or institutional repositories, but not controlled by commercial publishers, i. e., where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body (Schöpfel & Farace, 2010).

Adams, Smart, and Huff (2017) regarded grey literature as “the diverse and heterogeneous body of material available outside, and not subject to, traditional academic peer-review processes” (p. 432).

Gelfand and Tsang (2015) opined that the Prague Definition has been “challenged as still being too narrow considering new forms and practices of scholarship and research underway and the methods of publishing now widely available” (p. 30).
Grey literature is not available through standard distribution. It does not have standard bibliographic controls and is not peer-reviewed. It is ephemeral and historically difficult to find (Tillett & Newbold, 2006).

Hart (2001), as cited by Escoffery et al. (2014), defined grey literature as “a range of published and unpublished materials, which are not normally identifiable through conventional methods of bibliographic control. It can include book chapters, books, conference abstracts, reports, unpublished data, dissertations, policy documents and personal correspondence” (p. 2).

Schöpfel (2010) pointed out that a definition of grey literature should be “functional, systemic, context-sensitive, and linked to new models” (p. 19). In the academic environment, it is appropriate to define grey literature in the context of a university. All types of documents produced within a university in print and/or electronic format that are protected by intellectual property rights, of sufficient quality, and not controlled by commercial publishers qualify as grey literature.

III. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:
• Identify grey literature sources in Bells University of Technology (BellsTech), Nigeria;
• Acquire grey literature produced by BellsTech;
• Manage grey literature produced by BellsTech.

IV. Findings and Discussion

1. Identification of Grey Literature Sources in BellsTech

The three major groups of grey literature identified by Fatokun and Amusa (2014) have been adopted in the current study:

1) Periodical publications produced by the Directorate of the Public Relations Unit of the Bells University of Technology. They include serials publications and monographic series. For examples:
• BellsTech News – A newsletter publication of news and event in the University
• BellsTech News Bulletin – A publication devoted to communicating breaking news within the University Community
• BellsTech Annual Calendar – A publication to communicate important annual university event in pictures
• BellsTech Inaugural Lecture Series
• BellsTech Convocation Ceremony’s, Order of Proceedings and List of Graduates
• BellsTech Annual Convocation Lectures Series
• BellsTech Book of Addresses and Citation Series
• BellsTech Annual Symposium, Science and Technology Fair/ Exhibition Series
• BellsTech Annual Convocation Play Series
2) Intellectual write-ups produced by colleges (e.g., college members, administrative staff, and students), academic departments, administrative departments, students/professional associations, and learned societies within BellsTech. Examples of these resources include: research reports, theses and dissertation, student project reports, group assignments, term papers, departmental seminar series, administrative reports, academic staff seminars and workshop papers, conference proceedings, and special college/unit lecture papers.

3) Information resources produced by collegiate units of BellsTech. Examples of these resources include: college, units and departmental handbooks, news bulletin, past examination paper (semester question papers), professional examination questions (e.g., ICAN past questions) vice-chancellor’s addresses, keynote addresses, photographs, personnel records, official records, life streaming, and video recordings.

The aforementioned grey literature resources are of high research value but can be found only within the BellsTech community. The Library and its staff gave serious attention to the proper acquisition and management of such grey literature resources. However, academics do not attach much importance to these valuable resources. Consequently, colleges or units rarely provide the Library with copies of these materials on a regular basis. There are verbal directives for deposits, but no written policy to mandate the deposit in the Library. This make the acquisition, organization, and management of these resources difficult for librarians. In other cases, the university library is not notified of the availability of these publications.

2. Acquisition of Grey Literature in BellsTech

The main purpose of academic libraries is to support the actualisation of the objectives of their parent institutions. Accordingly, the BellsTech Library’s goal is to support the objectives of the University to promote teaching, learning, research, and community services. Therefore, the value of the grey literature resources generated within the University can never be overemphasized for research and self-development.

The major ways of acquiring grey literature in BellsTech are through the Library soliciting for copies, personal deposit, donation, free distribution by Governmental Organisations (GOs), Non-Governmental-Organisations (NGOs), and individuals, or bequeath by prominent personalities, and loan/exchange among others. Hence, the Library from inception had resolved to harness and exploit the potentials inherent in grey literature materials. Through continually monitoring, the Library acquires and manages the grey literature resources. This is for the benefit of colleges, students, and researchers. In order to achieve this, the Library has deployed the following avenues to search for and acquire grey literature:
1) Personal contacts: The Acquisitions/Gift and Exchange Unit of the Collection Development and Serials Departments of the University Library is involved in making personal contacts to source for grey literature materials. Since the inception, librarians are responsible for reaching out and making request/contact with the Public Relations Unit of the University, chairmen of committees and organizing committees of college lectures, colleges, departments and other individuals that produce grey literature within the University. Requests for copies are also facilitated through the use of internal memoranda. This method allows easy identification and location of the sources of grey literature within the University. Through this means, the Library is able to obtain copies of grey literature produced in the University for proper management.

2) Deposits: Legal deposits are the major avenue for the collection of grey literature publications in academic libraries. Students and researchers are expected and mandated to submit the hard and soft copies of their theses and dissertations to the University Library through their respective colleges. In addition, soft and hard copies of papers presented at departmental seminars, university lectures delivered in the academic environment, and proceedings of conferences held in the University are all to be deposited in the Library. The BellsTech Library, however, does not enjoy full legal deposit rights, even though the Library is a supposed "depository". The University depository policy or law is been developed. However, some students, departments, colleges/units, and the Publication Committee have been depositing copies of their publications to the Library. Examples of such resources include: university's annual convocation order of proceedings, inaugural lectures, college handbooks, student projects, theses and dissertations, and past examination questions from various colleges.

3) Attendance at workshops, conferences, and special academic activities on the campus: Librarians attend every activity that takes place on the BellsTech campus in order to collect copies of lectures, conference proceedings, papers, etc., issued at such events. Although the Library's requests at some of such events were not honored, this approach has been quite rewarding due to the quantity of grey literature acquired so far through this method.

4) Donation/Gifts: Grey literature created by other academic institutions, corporate bodies, and individuals outside the University are also received as donations/gifts. Examples of such resources include: academic calendars of universities, annual reports, personal papers, statistical reports (e.g., Central Bank of Nigeria, National Universities Commission, etc.). These resources are integrated with those generated in the University.

3. Management of Grey Literature in BellsTech

In BellsTech, the Directorate of Academic Planning, the Public Relation Unit of the Vice-Chancellor's Office, and colleges form the major sources of the University grey literature. Other sources include university-based associations, government publications, and student associations and societies.

The first step involved in the management of grey literature acquired through the aforementioned means is the appraisal and selection of the grey literature documents. This is the process to identify the significance of contents to library users. The next step is to integrate selected grey
literature into the library collection, which involves stamping (ownership stamp) and accessioning. Bulky grey literature materials are treated like Serials and are shelved by subject. Some grey literature materials are kept in vertical files with covers to prevent them from gathering dust. They are also tagged and labeled by college. Some copies are kept in big envelops with name tags to prevent deterioration. Newsletters are displayed on notice boards and in the newspaper reading area. Grey literature of historical values such as photo albums, videos, DVDs, and CD's are kept separately in the Reference Section for easy and convenient access. On request and during university programs, these grey literature materials are also exhibited as pictorials to tell the story and history of the University.

However, some grey literature materials (e.g., inaugural lectures, college lectures, convocation lectures, and book of addresses) are grouped together and displayed in open access at the serials' shelves by college. The same is applicable to conference reports and proceedings. But technical papers are displayed with journals on the serials' shelves.

Great literature such as Master’s theses, Ph.D. dissertations, and students projects are shelved at the Reference Section of the Main Library. They are managed by the Reprographic and Reference Department of the Library. Thereafter, the Bibliography Unit extracts their bibliographic details for further processing and integration into the collections. These resources are products of intellectual activities by academic departments. They need to be catalogued and classified before shelving.

Furthermore, other categories of grey literature generated in the University such as students’ term papers are kept in labeled cartoons in the special collection of the Library. Although some grey literature resources, such as past question papers, have sessional frequency, they are highly consulted by students. Such great literature materials are kept in office flat files by college in the Circulation Unit. Some other grey literature materials generated in the University are still very few in quantity, pending the establishment of the Grey Literature Unit of the Library at the completion of the Mike Adenuga library complex.

The ephemeral and non-standard nature of great literature materials is taken into consideration in the management of the BellsTech grey literature. For instance, the BellsTech News is usually a single-sheet loose-page publication. For this reason, they are kept in the BellsTech News File and are arranged by production date. Pamphlet-type grey literature materials are kept on the newspaper display racks for easy access. Access to grey literature materials within the Library are free but restricted. Only registered users can utilize them. To prevent theft and mutilation, information request forms are filled by users to make request for retrieval. To consult student project papers, Master’s thesis, and Ph.D. dissertations, users are provided with reprographic services to produce photocopies of needed materials.

V. Conclusion
Grey literature is generally considered as an important source of information. At the same time, it is relatively difficult to locate and even more difficult to manage, acquire, and access. Thus, all institutions and educational stakeholders and researchers should eagerly support libraries in increasing the accessibility of grey literature.

The need for university libraries to capture as many locally produced grey literature by their parent institutions as possible, regardless of their form and format has come to the fore. This is necessary in order to satisfy the interest of both primary and secondary users of libraries and to create community-based grey literature collections that will be appropriate to the fulfillment of the teaching, learning, and research mission of universities.

In order to support and promote the use of grey literature, the University Library of the Bells University of Technology, Ota (BellsTech) Nigeria has identified three major sources of grey literature produced in the University, highlighted methods of acquisition and management of grey literature resources, and showed how users access its grey literature collection.

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